

1,300+ University of California professors call for return of SAT and ACT exams

4 MIN • YOUTUBE • [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=-DD8QAKFAKI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DD8QAKFAKI)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Dd8qAKFAkI>

SUMMARY

The discussion highlights the growing debate over the role of standardized tests like the SAT and ACT in college admissions, particularly in STEM fields. While the initial push to eliminate these tests aimed to address inequalities in access and preparation, many educators now argue that the absence of standardized testing has contributed to significant gaps in student preparedness and grade inflation.

- Over 1,300 professors at the University of California advocate for reinstating standardized test requirements for STEM applicants due to observed preparation gaps.*
- The trend of de-emphasizing standardized tests began before the pandemic but accelerated during it, leading to concerns about student readiness.*
- Grade inflation has made it difficult to assess student preparedness based solely on high school grades, with many students receiving straight A averages.*
- Standardized tests provide an objective benchmark that can predict college performance and help identify students who may struggle without additional support.*
- The initial rationale for removing standardized tests was to reduce disparities linked to wealth, class, and race in college admissions.*
- Ivy League schools, except Columbia, have begun reintroducing standardized tests, indicating a potential shift back to their importance in admissions.*
- There is an ongoing reassessment of STEM education's value in light of emerging AI technologies and their impact on job markets.*
- The prevalence of high grades in high schools (around 50% A's or A minuses) has rendered transcripts less meaningful in evaluating student capabilities.*

Welcome back to the Takeout Fun Fact. I applied to college in 1979 and I took the standardized tests, SAT and the ACT, twice, both of them, cuz my scores were so bad, okay? That trend of standardized tests and application went on for decades, but it started to ebb a little bit before the pandemic and it really expanded during the pandemic when for lots of different reasons, college administrators and those reviewing applications decided there was something unequal about using standardized tests or giving them certain weight. More than 1,300 professors at the University of California, however, recently signed a letter calling on the school, and you might say possibly begging the school to reinstate requirements for these tests for STEM applicants, writing, quote, "We now observe preparation gaps so severe that instructors must reteach middle school mathematics." Doug Belkin covers higher education for the Wall Street Journal and has written several articles about this. Doug, this caught our eye. Talk to us about this reassessment of this trend that really accelerated during the pandemic.

>> Yeah, this was predicted when they dropped the SAT by a lot of faculty who said that it was going to be a problem. Uh what's happened is that grade inflation has become so problematic that it's hard to discern how prepared students are for university just by the grades. There's so many kids who have straight A averages now. The SAT and the ACT offers a benchmarked objective exam that gives students uh a way to show, you know, how prepared they will be and it's a pretty good predictor for college performance and without it, a lot of kids are struggling.

>> And Doug, remind my audience the good intentions of those who said, "Wait a minute, we should devalue or possibly take out of the application process these standardized test scores in the first place." What were they driving at? What were they trying to solve? >> The SATs and the ACTs um track with wealth, class, race, and so you end up with kids who are coming from under-resourced schools, minority school districts who don't do as well on this exam.

So, they're competing against kids who are coming from uh wealthier districts and have access to better test preparation. And so, the argument was that there are some kids who just weren't getting a fair shake because they didn't have uh um you know, they were bombing the test en masse. And so, to get rid of it would would get be get rid of a a hurdle uh to get into college and get into good colleges. >> You cover higher education, so you know that just because professors write a letter doesn't mean anything's going to change. Do you think this is part of a reassessment that's going to stick, meaning we will likely in a few years see standardized tests have a bounce-back moment?

>> I do think that's likely. It's happening now. You know, the Ivy Leagues, all except for Columbia, I think, have reintroduced the exam. Uh most of the folks who who take a close look at this say that it is a good predictor that students who take the exam and do well on it are more likely to succeed in college. Uh and if they don't, then they're just more likely to drop out. So, giving access to kids is is helpful, but if they're not finishing the their uh education, then it doesn't really help anybody.

>> Quick reminder to my audience, Doug, what does STEM sound stand for? And I've been reading recently that there's a reassessment of even the value of STEM education in the era of emerging AI technology. >> STEM is science, technology, engineering, and math. And there's a reassessment with soup-to-nuts in education right now because AI can do so much. You know, where it lands and and what jobs it pushes out uh right now is is the \$64,000 Um this has become an issue with the SAT at UC because it's it was STEM professors who wrote the letter and they're saying that the kids can't keep up in those classes. As a result, they can't cover as much ground and that as a result of result of that, students are graduating at a lower rate and they're not able to you know get jobs and and appropriate numbers in the STEM fields in California.

>> Very quickly, Doug, when you talk about grade inflation at the high school level, help my audience understand what you're talking about. >> Everybody gets an A. About 50% of the grades in high school right now are A's or A minuses. At elite colleges, it's even higher than that. So grade inflation has made transcripts almost irrelevant. >> Hm. Wish I could have gotten a piece of that action in 1979. Doug Doug Belkin of The Wall Street Journal. Great stuff. I appreciate your time very much. Thank you.